

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN P. MARTIN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 2568, TO AMEND THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT TO DESIGNATE THE CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL.

May 16, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 2568, a bill to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

The Department is currently completing the study authorized by Public Law 109-54 to determine the feasibility of designating this trail. We request that the committee defer action on the bill until the study is completed. To date, we have not encountered any information that would lead us to believe that the trail fails to meet the required criteria for designation as a national historic trail.

S. 2568 would designate the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail as a component of the National Trails System. The trail would be administered by the Department of the Interior in coordination with the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network and the Chesapeake Bay Program. In addition, the Secretary of the Interior would consult with other Federal, State, Tribal, regional, and local agencies, and the private sector in the administration of the trail. No land could be acquired for the trail outside the boundary of any Federally managed area without the consent of the owner of the land.

As we approach the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown Settlement and the anniversary in 2007 of the beginning of Captain John Smith's explorations, the conduct of our present study is most timely. The proposed trail would follow a series of routes extending approximately 3,000 miles along the Chesapeake Bay and the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay in the States of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, and the District of Columbia that trace Captain John Smith's voyages charting the land and waterways of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Captain John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in a series of voyages and travels from 1607 through 1609, while executing his company's directives to search for a "northwest passage" to the Pacific Ocean. Smith's two major explorations occurred in the summer of 1608, each leaving from Jamestown, Virginia. Between the two voyages, Smith and a small crew traversed the entire length of the Chesapeake Bay, explored the shoreline of the lower half of the Eastern Shore, and ventured into the major tributaries along the western shore of the bay. Smith had extensive interactions with Native Americans and recorded significant information about these peoples and the general Chesapeake environment in his book published in 1612. He also made one of the first and most detailed maps of the Chesapeake Bay. In Smith's words "heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a more perfect place for man's habitation."

Four hundred years later, the Chesapeake Bay's basic geography remains relatively similar to Smith's time, but much else has changed. More than 16 million people live in

the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with the densest concentrations at locations adjacent to where Smith traveled (Washington, DC, Baltimore, MD and the greater Norfolk/Hampton Roads area in VA). Human uses of the bay region have caused significant impacts on the Chesapeake environment and the Bay itself. The establishment of a national historic trail traversing the routes of John Smith's early voyages would likely provide increased public knowledge of the history, and sensitivity to the valuable resources of the Chesapeake Bay, as well as increased recreational opportunities.

The National Park Service enjoys a close association with the Chesapeake Bay and local governments and organizations in the region through the Gateways and Water Trails Network, authorized by the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998. This partnership system of 147 designated Chesapeake Bay Gateways serves to connect the American public with the resources and themes of the nationally significant Chesapeake Bay. Through its coordination of the network, the National Park Service is also authorized to provide technical and financial assistance to gateways for enhancing interpretation, improving public access, and stimulating citizen involvement in conservation and restoration efforts. All of these efforts would complement the proposed trail. S. 2568 provides for coordination of the trail with the Chesapeake Gateways and Water Trails Network and the Chesapeake Bay Program.

Our study of the feasibility of designating the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail is nearing conclusion. In March 2006, the National Park System Advisory Board found the routes of John Smith's voyages to be nationally significant, a major

requirement in the finding of national trail feasibility. The Advisory Board concluded that the trail is of national significance for its association with the following themes: (1) *Ethnic Heritage (American Indians)*; (2) *Exploration and Settlement*; and, (3) *Commerce and Trade*.

We expect to issue a draft report for public comment no later than August of this year. In light of this schedule, we would request that the committee defer action so that the study may be completed and the public given an opportunity to comment on any proposed designation alternatives. Our receipt of 167 letters regarding the study since it began indicates considerable public interest in trail designation.

The Department wishes to recognize the generous support of the State of Maryland, Commonwealth of Virginia, and the Chesapeake Bay Commission during the conduct of this study.

This concludes my prepared testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the committee might have.